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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Colombia

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the final report on the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, which concludes on 25 September 2017. In addition to covering major developments during the final 90-day reporting period, from 24 June to 25 September, it takes stock of the activities carried out throughout the course of the Mission's mandate. It also covers provisional work undertaken by the Mission to prepare the ground for the future Verification Mission, as requested by the Council in its resolution 2366 (2017).

II. Major developments

2. The reporting period was marked, above all, by the culmination of the ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the process for the laying down of arms that has unfolded since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, 10 months earlier, in November 2016, and the transformation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP) from a military organization into a new political party. The period also witnessed the start of the reintegration phase for former members of the FARC-EP.

3. The transformation of the FARC-EP into the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force signifies the transition of the FARC-EP into civilian life. More than 1,200 FARC-EP delegates took part in the founding congress, which was held in Bogota from 27 August to 1 September. The leader of FARC-EP, Rodrigo Londoño, also known as Timoleón Jiménez, was named head of the new party, and a national political council of 15 members was elected. The members expressed their readiness, in the context of the presidential elections to be held in 2018, to join a coalition government that would support the implementation of the Final Agreement.

4. Another step towards the reintegration of FARC-EP was taken on 15 August 2017 when the group submitted a final inventory of its property and assets, as required in the Final Agreement. On 24 August, the Government established a transitional interministerial commission to review the inventory and oversee its management. Members of the People's Alternative Revolutionary Force will be appointed to ensure the handover of the material listed in the inventory, which, under the Final Agreement, is to be used for reparations for victims of the armed conflict.

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Major legislation approved under "fast track" procedures

5. By the end of the reporting period, three important peace implementation laws had been adopted by Congress, one of which is pending reconciliation, and seven draft laws were pending consideration. The laws were passed under the so-called "fast track" procedures that allow for expedited congressional approval and will expire at the end of 2017. On 9 August, Congress adopted legislation to establish a subdirectorate of the National Protection Unit to provide security to members of the former FARC-EP and its successor political party under a mixed protection scheme with the national police. On 15 August, Congress adopted reforms to the National Royalty System, which provide for the earmarking of seven per cent of all royalties from natural resource concessions collected by municipal governments to support the implementation of the Final Agreement over the next 20 years. Finally, on 28 August, the Chamber of Representatives adopted legislation on the monopoly of force, including a constitutional prohibition of illegal armed civilian groups of any type. The law will now be reconciled with a version previously adopted by the Senate.

6. Other draft laws pending in Congress have implications for the legislative and presidential elections of 2018, including a draft law on political reform and a draft law regulating the creation of 16 special transitory peace electoral districts for social and civic representatives in areas affected by the conflict.

7. The statutory law establishing a special jurisdiction for peace to address crimes committed during the armed conflict is currently under consideration. On 29 August, the Attorney General publicly expressed concern that, as a result of delays, the work of that jurisdiction, which is to play a part in the reintegration process, may not begin until April or May 2018.

8. Finally, four pieces of legislation related to various dimensions of rural development and land tenure are pending consideration by Congress. These include legislation on a multipurpose land registry for rural areas, access to land within forest reserves, the creation of a national system for agricultural and fishery innovation and the regulation of land development a public programme supporting land productivity and infrastructure.

9. On 10 July, the President issued the last of three decrees granting amnesty to a total of 6,005 FARC-EP members who had completed the laying down of arms and been accredited by the Colombian Office of the High Commissioner for Peace.

Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement

10. During the reporting period, the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement continued to work to address challenges to the implementation of the Final Agreement. Following the road map agreement of 29 May 2017, minor adjustments were required during the reporting period. The parties to the agreement decided, inter alia, to postpone by two weeks, that is until 15 August, the transformation of the zones and points where the laying down of arms would take place into territorial areas for training and reintegration, where former combatants would initiate their reintegration. On 29 August, the Government appointed two new representatives to the Commission, Interior Minister Guillermo Rivera and the newly appointed High Commissioner for Peace Rodrigo Rivera Salazar. The latter succeeded Sergio Jaramillo, who played a central role in the peace process since the beginning of the negotiations with FARC-EP.

11. The Special High-level Forum for Women was established on 29 July and, together with the Special High-level Forum for Ethnic Peoples established on 15 March, is to serve as an interlocutor and advisor to the Commission to bring the perspectives and contributions of women and ethnic peoples into the peace implementation process. Both bodies have strongly called for greater engagement with the Commission to fulfil their obligations under the Final Agreement.

Temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army

12. On 4 September, the Government of Colombia and the National Liberation Army announced, within the framework of the peace talks held in Quito, that they had agreed to a bilateral and temporary ceasefire to take effect from 1 October 2017 to 12 January 2018, as well as several humanitarian measures. The announcement was made just before the visit to Colombia from 6 to 10 September of Pope Francis, who called for reconciliation among all Colombians. The parties also announced the establishment of a monitoring and verification mechanism that would involve the Government, the National Liberation Army, the United Nations and the Catholic Church. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia has been in consultations with both parties on the modalities of the potential support of the United Nations for this process, on the basis of which the Secretary-General will make recommendations as soon as possible for consideration by the Council.

III. Mission tasks

A. Activities relating to the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and coordination of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism

13. Throughout the Mission's mandate, the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, comprised of observers from the United Nations, the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP, proved to be an invaluable confidence-building tool at all levels. The Mission, as its coordinator, focused its monitoring responsibilities on the zones and points mentioned above, the security zones and the surrounding areas where the armed forces are deployed.

14. Since the beginning of its activities, the Mechanism has received 491 requests for the verification of incidents, and 473 incidents have been verified. Of those, 331 were deemed outside the mandate of the Mechanism, while the remaining 142 incidents comprised 78 cases of non-compliance with ceasefire and cessation of hostilities protocols due to misinterpretations or a lack of coordination, 54 minor violations and 10 serious violations. Most violations were related to movements of FARC-EP members, incursions by the public security forces into the security zones of the zones or points, and irregularities in the security controls on access to the zones and points. No serious violations were recorded during the reporting period.

B. Laying down of arms

Laying down of individual arms

15. During the reporting period, the Mission completed the individual certification of FARC-EP members who had laid down arms at the zones and points. This individual certification was a key component of the process that enabled FARC-EP members to complete their transition towards legality and fully participate in the reintegration phase. The storing in the Mission's containers of arms brought into the camps by FARC-EP members was completed on 27 June 2017.

16. All unstable material in the zones and points was destroyed and all collected ammunition was incinerated between 1 and 28 July. Technical guidance and instruction videos were disseminated to observers at local team sites to ensure that those actions were carried out safely and effectively.

17. Between 31 July and 15 August, containers were removed from all 26 camps through a series of land and air-land operations and transported to a central warehouse outside of Bogota. The transportation of the containers was carried out by convoys escorted by the national police and the armed forces.

18. On 15 August, the removal of containers at the camp of Pondores (La Guajira Department) marked the conclusion of the process and was celebrated in a ceremony attended by President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC-EP leadership. This event initiated the transformation of each of the zones and points into territorial areas for training and reintegration. Subsequently, former combatants were granted freedom of movement into and out of their camps.

19. On 16 August, the Mission began to disable all armaments at the central warehouse.

Verification of the disposal of arms caches

20. During the reporting period, the pace of operations to verify the disposal of arms caches accelerated as the deadline of 1 September neared. Those operations were conducted by the Mission with FARC-EP, and logistical and security assistance from the armed forces and the police. On 31 August, at the request of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement, the deadline was extended for an additional two weeks, that is until 15 September. Since that date, the Colombian armed forces have been in charge of disposing of remaining caches, with the support of former FARC-EP members.

21. Two security incidents occurred during arms cache verification operations. On 6 August, in the area of El Pedregal, Cauca Department, an attack allegedly committed by FARC-EP dissidents resulted in the wounding of one member of the police escort. On 14 August, a member of the armed forces was killed when he stepped on a landmine while his unit was securing the perimeter for an arms cache verification operation in the municipality of Novita, Chocó Department.

22. Over the course of the Mission's mandate, FARC-EP provided information on more than 1,000 arms caches. By the completion of operations, on 15 September, the Mission had undertaken a total of 182 operations in coordination with FARC-EP to remove arms and destroy explosives from 750 arms caches.

23. On 22 September, the Mission informed the Government of Colombia about the completion of its activities relating to the laying down of arms by FARC-EP, including the disposal of arms collected in the zones and points, the material extracted from arms caches and all unstable material. In the course of the process for the laying down of arms, the Mission collected a total of 8,994 arms, 1,765,862 ammunition rounds, 38,255 kg of explosives, 11,015 grenades, 3,528 antipersonnel mines, 46,288 electric detonation caps, 4,370 mortar rounds and 51.911 metres of detonating cord and fuses.

C. Monitoring of the provision of goods and services to Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army camps

24. Both parties requested that the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism assess progress in establishing FARC-EP camps and in providing logistical support and health care. The Mechanism also supported and facilitated the implementation of some reintegration activities led by private and public entities in the zones and points, including training initiatives under the National Vocational Training Service, the issuance of identity documents by the National Registry and other activities carried out by universities and non-governmental organizations.

25. The Mechanism continued to monitor the delivery of supplies to FARC-EP camps, including food, clothing, hygiene items and cleaning products. Improvements were seen during the reporting period, especially with regard to the supply of food. The ties with local communities continue to be strengthened in keeping with agreements regarding the purchase of food from local producers. In some cases, as a result of the successful implementation of some productive and agricultural projects by FARC-EP members in the camps, food was purchased from FARC-EP producers. The provision of food and other products by the Government has been extended until 15 October, and the provision of health care until 30 November. The provision of health care at camp level continues to suffer from the fact that it cannot handle the more serious and chronic conditions.

D. Gender mainstreaming and engagement with women's groups

26. Throughout its mandate, the Mission had strong and consistent engagement with women's groups at the national, regional and local levels, and it worked closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on gender issues. The Mission also worked with the Mechanism to ensure a gender-sensitive approach in the activities of the Mechanism. Under the Mechanism gender directive, tripartite gender teams were established in regional offices and local team sites. These teams work with the civilian population on gender issues and facilitate their engagement with the Mechanism.

27. During the reporting period, ongoing dialogue with women representatives from FARC-EP, the Women's Special High-level Forum that supports the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and other women's networks provided important inputs for the planning of the Verification Mission and recommendations on how best to integrate a gender approach in verification tasks.

E. Activities related to the liaison and coordination functions

28. Throughout its mandate, the Mission consistently engaged with a broad array of counterparts, including national, regional and local authorities and the international community, as well as civil society organizations, women's networks, ethnic group representatives, religious leaders and academia members.

29. During the reporting period, the Mission focused its liaison and engagement activities on organizing briefings and exchanges on the completion of its mandate, the evolution of the peace process and the mandate of the new Verification Mission, as well as on the different perspectives on reintegration and security guarantees. Civil society organizations have highlighted their concerns about threats against community and social leaders, human rights defenders and FARC-EP members.

Private sector representatives have conveyed their interest in collaborating with the Government in support of the reintegration of former combatants. The Special High-level Forum on Ethnic Peoples stressed the importance of bringing a community-sensitive perspective to efforts to advance peace, security, reintegration and reconciliation.

Coordination with the United Nations country team

30. While the Mission was not integrated with the United Nations country team, there was a very good level of coordination throughout the course of the Mission's mandate. During the start-up phase, the Mission relied heavily on the existing capacity of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to undertake procurement activities on behalf of the Mission, under cooperation arrangements consistent with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. UNDP provided temporary office accommodations for several months pending the identification of Mission headquarters in Bogota. The Mission also drew on existing capacity of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bogota to facilitate the provision of travel services. When the Mission began expanding to the regional and local levels, the country team counterparts provided invaluable support in terms of logistics, expertise and engagement with local actors. As the United Nations Mission in Colombia transitions into the Verification Mission, regular coordination with the country team is taking place at the national, regional and local levels, including through participation in the local coordination teams established by the country team.

31. During the reporting period, the Mission also co-led with the Office of the Resident Coordinator an integrated planning process that led to the recommendations on the new Verification Mission (see S/2017/745). As a result of this planning process, a core group was established to ensure a coordinated approach in areas of mutual interest (i.e., information management, local coordination and risk analysis) as well as two joint Mission-country team working groups focused on both aspects of the new Verification Mission's mandate, namely, reintegration and security guarantees. The Mission and the country team are currently undertaking efforts to co-locate regional and subregional offices of the Verification Mission, where feasible, with a view to increasing efficiency.

32. On 27 June, following a formal request from President Juan Manuel Santos, the Secretary-General declared Colombia eligible to access financing from the Peacebuilding Fund, which will offer funding opportunities over the next 18 months for comprehensive stabilization interventions in the territories affected by the conflict, support for victims of forced displacement and the political and socioeconomic integration of former combatants.

IV. Provisional verification activities carried out pursuant to resolution 2366 (2017)

33. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2366 (2017), the Mission began on 10 July the verification of commitments relating to the reintegration of former FARC-EP members and security guarantees for the group and for conflict-affected communities that will be the focus of the work of the Verification Mission that will start on 26 September. These activities have been developed by the Mission's current 9 regional and 26 local headquarters.

A. Security guarantees

34. Prior to the start of initial verification activities on 10 July, the following national structures were put in place as part of the commitment to establishing an integrated security system: the creation on 9 December 2016 of the Technical Committee on Security and Protection, with the participation of members of the Government and the FARC-EP; the adoption on 23 February of legislation setting up a national protection unit to provide security to FARC-EP members; and the creation of the Subdirectorate of the National Protection Unit and the Security and Protection Corps. At the time of reporting, 210 former FARC-EP members had completed the mandatory training to become part of the National Protection Unit that will be formed of up to 1,200 FARC-EP personnel, along with members of the national police.

35. A key focus of efforts in the period since 10 July has been the strengthening of the deployment of Colombian police and armed forces around the 26 territorial areas for training and reintegration, where most of the former combatants live, and to nearby communities. This reconfiguration of the State's security presence was initiated on 15 August as the final arms were removed from the 26 zones and points.

36. With regard to the police, the basic unit of the rural mounted police has established posts in all 26 territorial areas, with an average of 33 police officers at each of those locations. All posts have at least one female officer responsible for gender-related issues and gender-based violence. The unit is also consulting with former combatants and communities about the establishment of immediate attention police centres near each of the territorial areas. In addition, the police has begun implementing the "Communities Safe and at Peace" programme, aimed at strengthening trust and dialogue with communities, local organizations and former combatants.

37. With regard to military presence, the battalions of terrestrial operations are positioned in the proximity of all 26 territorial areas. An average of 350 soldiers are positioned at each location, in keeping with parameters announced under Plan Victoria, the main territorial stabilization operation of the Ministry of Defence. Given the forthcoming termination of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, the armed forces have designed an inter-institutional concept, known as "Blue Tents" which seeks to bring public security entities under the same roof at the local level and improve coordination with communities, civil authorities and former combatants, mainly on security issues. The Mission verified that these coordination mechanisms had begun activities in several territorial areas in the Antioquia, Cesar, Guaviare and Meta Departments. The establishment of Blue Tents in the remaining areas is pending.

38. The response to these deployments from both communities and former combatants has been positive, as have efforts to establish regular channels for dialogue. At the same time, the communities have made it clear that their understanding of security includes not just protection but also basic social services, which they see as a necessary complement to the actions of security forces.

39. With regard to other security-related commitments under the Final Agreement, during the reporting period, the Subcommission of the National Commission on Security Guarantees undertook activities focused on the following areas: finalizing the Commission's workplan and its internal regulations; analysing the pattern of attacks against human rights defenders and social leaders; and better defining its approach to criminal groups, especially those successors of paramilitary groups. It should be noted that the Subcommission has engaged with civil society during this process.

40. On 25 July, the committee responsible for the selection of the Director of the Special Investigation Unit under the Office of the Attorney General called for applications for that position. It is expected that the committee will present on 14 November three candidates for the Attorney General's consideration. The Special Investigation Unit is to play a major role in efforts to dismantle organizations responsible for attacks on human rights defenders, social movements, political movements and those taking part in the implementation of the peace process.

41. In June, an elite police corps was created to serve, together with the Special Investigation Unit, as first responders to criminal incidents covered under the Final Agreement. The elite corps, which is reported to have currently 1,088 members, has thus far focused on combating the Gulf Cartel criminal organization and on supporting the investigations of cases of attacks on human rights defenders and social leaders.

42. The National Commission on Security Guarantees continues to monitor and examine allegations of attacks on human rights defenders and social leaders. The persistence of these cases requires prompt and effective action by State institutions to identify and punish those responsible, as well as a comprehensive and careful analysis to determine the underlying causes of violence and its impact on communities and their political participation.

43. Similarly, during the reporting period, the Mission received reports from the Office of the Attorney General, the police and human rights organizations about eight cases of homicide of former FARC-EP members and their relatives (seven former members and one relative). Going back further, since the former FARC-EP entered the zones in January 2017, the Mission has received reports from the aforementioned entities of 25 cases of homicide against former FARC-EP combatants (13) and their relatives (12). Among the former, five had recently received amnesty, five had been living within the zones and three had been living outside the zones. The majority (eight) of the former members belonged to militia structures of the FARC-EP. At the time of reporting, all cases were under investigation and three had resulted in the capture of suspects, who were pending prosecution. In one case, the perpetrator was convicted through the special indigenous jurisdiction. Most perpetrators, however, had not been arrested and the motivations for most of those crimes remained to be established.

44. Threats to the security of communities, organizations and former combatants appear to come primarily from persisting armed groups, including FARC-EP dissidents, and the effects of illegal economic activities. Even though no direct threat posed by these groups to former combatants has been identified in most territorial areas for training and reintegration, security entities are concerned about the risks that they may present once the political and socioeconomic reintegration process is more advanced, especially if political and social activities are perceived by those groups as a threat. In this context, an exercise involving assessments of collective risks for former combatants, the identification of individual high-risk cases and recommendations for protection arrangements has been carried out in 20 of the 26 territorial areas.

B. Resolution of legal situation

45. A prerequisite for the reintegration of FARC-EP members is the resolution of their legal situation. As set forth in the road map of 29 May 2017, the parties agreed in the framework of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement that the Government should take all measures necessary to ensure that, by the completion of the process for the laying

down of arms, all members of the FARC-EP in prison would be either freed or granted conditional release, a responsibility that lies with the judicial branch, and all members of FARC-EP in the zones and points would be granted amnesty and arrest warrants against them would be lifted. This has proved to be more challenging than initially envisaged.

46. Following meetings with political and judicial actors to discuss possible avenues to facilitate rapid compliance with those commitments, the Mission issued a public statement on 13 July in which it expressed concern over the continuing imprisonment of FARC-EP members despite the adoption of an amnesty law (Law No. 1820 of 2016) and related decrees. Working with both parties, the Mission further initiated an active verification of compliance with commitments.

47. Among the measures taken by the Government, the following should be highlighted: Decree 1252 of 2017 to facilitate and accelerate judicial decisions in application of the amnesty law; Decree 285 of 2017 designating 709 FARC-EP members as "peace advocates" able to undertake peace-related tasks outside prison despite ongoing judicial proceedings against them under the amnesty law; and Decree 1274 of 2017, which grants conditional release to FARC-EP members who had been charged or sentenced with serious crimes but had not served more than 5 years of prison time and had been transferred to alternative detention facilities during the previous phase, and which also lifts all arrest warrants against FARC-EP members, including those issued for extradition purposes. The Government reported, that as at 8 September 2017, a total number of 2,590 FARC-EP members had been released from prison, of an estimated total of 3,000 to 3,400.

48. Constructive discussions continue to take place between the Government and FARC-EP with a view to ensuring full implementation of all measures. Critical issues that should be addressed include, among others, the prevention of arrest and detention of FARC-EP members, the conclusion of pending judicial proceedings (in particular those relating to the amnesty law), the release of all designated peace advocates and of those under consideration for this designation, as well as the resolution of extradition requests and individual cases of special resident peace visas for foreign members of FARC-EP.

C. Reintegration

49. At the present time, the reintegration of the members of FARC-EP is undoubtedly the most critical task within the overall peace consolidation agenda. The grave problems caused by armed dissidence in several parts of the country or the attempts by armed groups and illegal actors to lure former combatants with the prospect of high benefits serve as a reminder of what could be the implications of failure. Time is of the essence as, 10 months after the signing of the Final Agreement, and while the laying down of arms is celebrated as a great achievement, the mindset of many former FARC-EP members in the territorial areas for training and reintegration remains one of uncertainty, or even anxiety, as to what the future holds. Over the past several months, preparation has taken place in several areas, and a number of actions have been undertaken. Today, as government support for the territorial areas with regard to food, health and other services is scheduled to come to an end, uncertainty must give way to confidence and anxiety to a positive outlook, in particular with regard to the productive future of those FARC members with a farmer's background who aim at reintegration in the rural areas. Furthermore, the reintegration of former FARC-EP members is bound to have an impact on another dimension of the restoration of peace in Colombia: the peace process between the Government and the National Liberation Army.

Political reintegration

50. The law of May 2017 that contains the provisions for political reintegration is still under review by the Constitutional Court. As mentioned above, the founding congress of FARC as a political party defined the main elements of its political platform and met the organizational requisites for its registration as a political party by the National Electoral Council. Twenty-three per cent of the 111 elected members of the party's directorate are women.

51. In June, the policy and research institute Centre for Political Thought and Dialogue was established with support from the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The Centre provides technical support to the new FARC political party in the context of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement and the National Reintegration Council, as well as technical support to the six provisional FARC spokespersons in Congress (who do not have the right to vote).

Socioeconomic reintegration

52. The National Reintegration Council has met regularly but is yet to fulfil its central responsibility: the definition of an overall strategy for the reintegration process. The absence of a strategy and implementation plan for socioeconomic reintegration is a serious challenge. The restructured Agency for Reintegration and Normalization, which has carried out an early reintegration plan, will have an important role in the implementation of socioeconomic reintegration. As such, it requires resources and capacities in line with its tasks. The Agency's Technical Unit in charge of the reintegration of FARC members, with the direct participation of former combatants, is still to be created and its director to be appointed.

53. The provision of basic living conditions to the former combatants in the territorial areas for training and reintegration is a major aspect of their reintegration. Reintegration efforts with a community-based focus were to begin upon the conversion of the zones and points to those territorial areas on 15 August. The management of the areas remains the responsibility of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace until 1 October and will then shift to the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization. Owing to logistical delays over the past eight months, only seven of the 26 FARC-EP camps have been fully built. Therefore, one of the main operational challenges is completing the camps, in addition to ensuring continuity of services, especially health services, into the reintegration phase. Health care is a particularly sensitive issue given the fact that, as has been observed in guerrilla groups undergoing reintegration, a high number of former combatants suffer from chronic conditions. There are 17 particularly serious cases that require specialized attention. The Agency, together with FARC, is trying to attend those cases but faces logistical challenges. In addition, the programme that focuses on high-cost health care and the treatment of injuries suffered by FARC-EP members during the conflict, which is provided under Decree 899 of 2017, has not yet been implemented.

54. During the reporting period, the Agency focused its efforts on the implementation of early reintegration plans that include access to health, psychosocial and pension services, education and vocational training, cultural and sports activities and fostering community engagement.

55. With regard to financial support, during the reporting period, the Government began the process of opening bank accounts for former FARC-EP members in the Agrarian Bank of Colombia. Bank accounts are a prerequisite for the Government to be able to transfer payments (basic income, a one-off normalization allowance and

economic support for productive projects) to which former combatants are eligible over a period of 24 months. The Agency reported that 9,491 of the 11,445 persons accredited by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace had opened bank accounts. The Mission received reports of difficulties in completing required documentation and accreditation. On 30 August, payments began to eligible members for their basic income and one-off normalization allowance.

56. One of the important challenges faced by the National Reintegration Council will be to work with former FARC-EP members and conflict-affected communities to define a viable model of economic reintegration. The reporting period has been marked by the start of a limited number of actions at the national and local levels. On 6 July, the results of a socioeconomic census of FARC-EP members were submitted to the National Reintegration Council by the National University. They drew upon a survey of 10,015 former FARC-EP members, of whom 2,267 were women. Some of the preliminary findings are that 66 per cent of former combatants came from rural areas; 77 per cent reported having no housing; 60 per cent expressed interest in collective agricultural activities, while 39 per cent indicated a preference for working in construction and housing; and 7.5 per cent of women of reproductive age were pregnant. A significant percentage of the respondents indicated that they were of ethnic origin (18 per cent considered themselves indigenous and 12 per cent Afrodescendent) pointing to the need for effective coordination with ethnic authorities and mechanisms.

57. On 4 July, Ecomun, a joint social and economic cooperative organization for former FARC-EP members, was launched, although it has had limited activity to date owing to delays in defining a strategy for the economic reintegration of its members. One of the main achievements of Ecomun has been the successful training of 4,947 former FARC-EP members in "solidarity economy" (cooperative models) at the territorial areas for training and reintegration. The road map of 29 May 2017 provided for the establishment of a working group for the formulation, within 60 days, of viable productive projects to be implemented by Ecomun or other organizations. The working group was established but has not presented its conclusions to the National Reintegration Council. For its part, the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization has visited 12 territorial areas for training and reintegration and designed seven projects. In addition, UNDP is working with the National Reintegration Council to support the deployment of experts to facilitate the formulation of sustainable productive projects. So far, only a few productive projects have been presented to the National Reintegration Council, mostly supported by the international community, namely, a capacity-building project funded by Caritas Norway and the Acuacop cooperative, and environmental protection programmes for members of the former FARC-EP and the conflict-affected communities in Miravalle (Antioquia Department) and Mesetas and Macarena (Meta Department), supported by the Ministry of Environment, the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNDP and the Colombian Foundation of Former Combatants and Peace Promotors (FUCEPAZ).

58. A mine action project implemented by a humanitarian demining organization composed of former FARC members (Humanicemos), supported by the Government's agency on mine action (the Department for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines) and the Mine Action Service of the United Nations, and with funding from the European Union, is aimed at employing 1,000 former FARC-EP members.

59. The Mission can also report examples of economic initiatives launched by former FARC-EP members themselves. In Colinas (Guaviare Department), former FARC-EP members have started a project with food crops as well as livestock. Apart from the construction of greenhouses, which was funded by a non-governmental

organization, the remainder of the initiative has been self-funded. In Agua Bonita (Caquetá Department), five projects have been identified: fish farming, bakery, carpentry shop, shoe shop and an agricultural initiative. In La Reforma (Meta Department), projects are under way to grow sacha inchi seeds, with a view to exporting the oil produced therefrom.

60. One of the key challenges for the sustainability of economic reintegration is access to land, which has not been clearly established in the Final Agreement. An appropriate and swift mechanism for land titling should be urgently established to ensure the viability of productive projects for former FARC-EP members and communities. It is also important to follow up on the commitment in the road map agreement that refers to a land inventory (which may include property listed in the inventory of FARC-EP assets) that will be available to former FARC-EP members and communities for productive projects.

61. While female former combatants have participated in the available reintegration programmes, the implementation of those projects does not clearly address the specific situation of women yet. Local initiatives by women's organizations have sought to include female former combatants, as in Pondores (Guajira Department), where the Association of Women Coffee Growers from Perijá has opened opportunities for female former combatants to get involved in the Association and its projects.

62. Thirty-four minors were removed from FARC-EP camps on 15 and 16 August with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross. From September 2016 to August 2017, 122 minors formerly associated with the FARC-EP (66 girls and 56 boys) began the reintegration process, which implied their registration as victims, their inclusion in the special programme for reintegration known as "A Different Path of Life" led by the Office of the Presidential Council for Human Rights and their being granted access to the administrative programme of rights restitution. The effective implementation of the programme is still incipient and specific details about its scope, timeline, costs, funding and modalities for transition to the adult programme have not been publicly shared. Efforts are being made by the Office of the Presidential Council for Human Rights to address the issue of minors who exited the camps during early phases of the process for the laying down of arms. The Government arranged for continued care for 118 minors, including through temporary care institutions (22), family reunification (44), foster families (5) and temporary care centres (19 minors remain in the centres managed by the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Children's Fund). In addition, 10 minors opted to return to the territorial areas for training and reintegration and another 18 who have reached 18 years of age are transitioning to the adult programme. Efforts to support minors living in the territorial areas are ongoing. Nevertheless, comprehensive access to protection, health care, education and recreational activities remains a challenge. The reintegration programmes for families with young children are also pending.

63. A health profiling exercise was conducted in the zones and points by the Ministry of Health. Health services in those areas were initially provided through mobile basic health posts and mobile teams and limited to basic health services. Logistical difficulties and a lack of supplies were some of the challenges faced in the implementation of health programmes.

64. Some 9,755 persons have been affiliated with the social security system, which is a partial but significant step in improving access to health care. The Mission reports that a more modest estimate of 3,840 former combatants have been affiliated with the national pension fund, owing to limited information in the local areas regarding the affiliation process and its benefits.

V. Mission structures

A. International observers

65. As at 10 September, the Mission had 428 observers deployed from 19 countries, of an authorized ceiling of 450, 49 of whom (11 per cent) were women.

66. With a view to ensuring a seamless transition to the Verification Mission, the Mission has requested that a number of observers just below the ceiling of 120 authorized in resolution 2377 (2017) remain on the ground until the end of the tour of duty to serve with the Verification Mission. Remaining observers will be repatriated in a staggered manner starting on 25 September. Observers to be repatriated will remain operational until the end of the Mission's mandate, on 25 September, after which, pending their checkout, they will focus on administrative handover tasks.

67. On 18 August, a Chilean observer died of a sudden health condition. The Mission paid tribute to his dedication and service.

B. Coordination and substantive personnel

68. The Mission has recruited a total of 96 international civilian staff, that is, 86 per cent of the authorized strength, 78 national staff out of an authorized strength of 100 and 53 United Nations Volunteers, equivalent to 93 per cent of the authorized strength. In August 2017, women comprised 48 per cent of the civilian staff of the Mission.

C. Mission support

69. With regard to the operations of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, the Government of Colombia and the United Nations agreed on a cost-sharing arrangement whereby the cost of support would be allocated between the United Nations and the Government in accordance with applicable Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2307 (2016).

70. The Mission and the Government of Colombia are in the final stages of negotiation of the pending letters of assist for the provision of premises, transport services and communications and of the memorandum of understanding governing cost-sharing arrangements in order to complete pending transactions from the Mission in Colombia.

71. During the reporting period, Mission Support focused on three dimensions of the process for the laying down of arms: the provision of air support and land transportation for operations to dispose of arms caches; the provision of aviation and movement control support to transport arms and ammunition to Bogota safely, and the provision of logistical and technical support for disposing arms collected through the process for the laying down of arms.

72. A second focus during the period has been to ensure the continuity of operations as the Mission transitions from its current status, with its considerable reliance on government-provided services, to that of the Verification Mission, which will depend fully on United Nations support arrangements. Mission Support is working to establish Mission contracts through direct negotiations with existing vendors to ensure continuity in ground transport support and is developing options for office and staff accommodations to ensure continuity of operations at the 26 local sites after 25 September, when governmental support is expected to end. At

some of the local sites that are distant from population centres, the Mission is working to identify solutions for challenging conditions, including potable water, the availability of goods and services and access to health facilities.

D. Conduct and discipline

73. During the reporting period, the Mission continued to focus its conduct and discipline efforts on prevention measures, such as enhanced induction training sessions, the conduction of refresher training sessions and monitoring visits by the Conduct and Discipline Team to regional offices and local sites. The Mission initiated the mapping of government actors involved in victim assistance, including their local presence in the regions where Mission personnel are deployed.

74. Two allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported over the course of the Mission's mandate. One was found to be unsubstantiated, while the other is currently under review at Headquarters. Both cases were also reported to the Office of the Attorney General. After its own investigations, the Office recently closed both cases and declined to press charges.

E. Safety and security

75. On 5 July, the employee of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime who had been held hostage for more than two months by members of a dissident FARC-EP front in Guaviare Department was released unharmed. However, given continuing security concerns, the previously adopted restrictions on non-essential, unescorted movements of United Nations personnel continued to apply in areas of Cauca, Guaviare, Meta and Caquetá Departments. The security risk assessment developed for the Mission predicts that residual risk levels in relation to most identified threats (kidnapping, attack by spoilers, crossfire and violent demonstrations) vary between low and medium. From a security management perspective, the activities planned for the Mission were considered viable insofar as the relevant risk management measures were fully implemented. Landmines continued to pose considerable risk in some areas.

76. Throughout its mandate, the Mission had a unified security structure with safety and security coordination and advice being provided jointly by the Department of Safety and Security to the Mission and the country team. This approach evolved over the course of the mandate as the concept was refined both at Headquarters and on the ground. Given that the unified security structure has proved useful, it is advisable that it be continued for the forthcoming Mission and that its potential for maximizing efficiency in similar situations be analysed.

VI. Observations

77. The United Nations Mission in Colombia will conclude its mandate on 25 September, having accomplished the two tasks entrusted to it by the Security Council. Its role in coordinating the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for the cease-fire and the cessation of hostilities and its specific role with respect to overseeing the laying down of arms have undoubtedly contributed to the successful implementation of the corresponding provisions of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, through which more than five decades of conflict between the FARC-EP and the State of Colombia have been brought to a close. The strong united support of the Security Council and the international community, the dedication and hard work of

the Mission's personnel and, above all, the firm political will of both parties have made these initial accomplishments possible. My observations will focus on the lessons learned from the Mission, which may be useful for the United Nations and in the future.

78. I would like to draw attention to the commitment to and trust in the process shown by the Security Council from the outset, as it responded to the wish of the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP for a United Nations peace operation to provide support to their peace process. The Organization has been able in this case to offer a response that was quick, flexible and tailored to the particularities of the Colombian situation. The Council had the foresight to invest in the peace process at an early stage, lending its vote of confidence when a final settlement was still not assured, thus greatly facilitating timely preparations that were an important element for the successful implementation of the mandate. It is worth recalling that, on 25 January 2016, when it adopted resolution 2261 (2016) establishing the Mission and authorizing the Secretary-General to begin preparations on the ground, the two parties were still several months away from concluding their final ceasefire and eight months from the signing of a final peace agreement. The use of a two-stage mandating process involving preparations followed by a more detailed mandate when all information was available, which has also been adopted for the Verification Mission, proved to be an efficient practice. I commend the Council for this approach, as well as for providing the Mission with a clear, time-bound and achievable mandate.

79. The full operational insertion of a United Nations peace operation within a tripartite mechanism including the two parties to a peace agreement is undoubtedly one of the innovative elements of our engagement with Colombia. The opportunities and challenges that it entailed should be analysed for its potential applicability in other peace processes. During the negotiations of the ceasefire agreement, the parties invested significant efforts in building confidence between one another. The same approach was used in the implementation phase, which contributed largely to the success of the operation. The strong adherence to the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreement is at least in part due to the effective functioning of the Mechanism. On balance, the Mission benefited greatly from its partnership with the two parties, which facilitated to a large extent the management of a complex mandate in difficult and remote terrain, without impinging on the Mission's independence, which was critical to the credibility of the verification process.

80. Support arrangements were unprecedented in United Nations peace operations in that the functioning of the tripartite Mechanism, as well as significant aspects of the establishment and maintenance of the field deployment, were subject to cost-sharing arrangements with the Government of Colombia, as approved by the Security Council in its resolution 2307 (2016). This required the introduction of innovative approaches in delivering necessary services to the Mission and the Mechanism with the Government acting as primary provider of goods and services for the latter. The establishment of the respective framework agreements with the Government of Colombia required in-depth discussions that extended until the final days of the Mission. At the same time, the Mission's start-up benefited from the authorization of standing administrative measures governing human resources management and the procurement of goods and services.

81. Although the Mission was primarily composed of observers from military and police backgrounds performing tasks related to ceasefire monitoring, the laying down of arms and the coordination of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, its civilian component performed critical liaison, outreach and public information tasks that enabled the Mission to engage closely with government counterparts, local communities and civil society. Outreach by the Mission to all sectors of

Colombian society contributed to fostering consensus in support of the Mission's presence and the relevance of the implementation of the ceasefire and the laying down of arms, despite continued debate within society with respect to other elements of the Final Agreement. It was important, over the course of the Mission's mandate, to ensure adequate coordination and communication between its civilian and observer components, including through information-sharing, common situational analysis and joint outreach to stakeholders.

82. As previously noted, the United Nations country team provided invaluable operating capabilities for the establishment of the Mission and continued to support its work throughout the Mission's mandate. I am confident that the very good relations between the Mission and the country team, which itself has important responsibilities with regard to supporting the implementation of the peace agreements, will strengthen further under the forthcoming Verification Mission. This experience can provide a useful example for how peace operations can work together with a country team even though they are not structurally integrated.

83. I would like to express my gratitude to the observer-contributing countries, in particular those from the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. The strong support of the region for the peace process, as well as the broad range of countries contributing with observers, enhanced the credibility and effectiveness of the Mission. I would also like to acknowledge the two guarantors of the peace process, Cuba and Norway, and the two accompanying countries, Chile and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

84. I would like to express once again my recognition and gratitude to all past and present observers and civilian personnel of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, as well as to my Special Representative for Colombia, Jean Arnault, for their dedication to the cause of peace in Colombia. The requests from the parties for additional United Nations verification, especially through the forthcoming Verification Mission, are a sign of the confidence generated by the Mission through the seriousness and impartiality of its work.

85. The peace process in Colombia continues to be a source of good news and hope for the country and for the world. The achievements of the parties could set an example for other peace processes elsewhere in the world, and deserve the utmost credit and recognition. The consolidation of peace, however, will require sustained commitment by all parties. The mandate of the Verification Mission and the responsibilities entrusted to the United Nations system in Colombia in the Final Peace Agreement provide an opportunity to stay the course in supporting this Colombian-led peace process.